

## Cultivating Verification in One School Zen: A New *Shushōgi* for Now

Words of Eihei Dōgen, selected and arranged by Dōshō Port

The endeavor to negotiate the Way, as I teach now, consists in discerning all things in view of enlightenment, and putting such a unitive awareness into practice in the midst of the revaluated world.<sup>1</sup> Although this inconceivable dharma is abundant in each person, it is not actualized without practice, and it is not experienced without realization. When you release it, it fills your hand—how could it be limited to one or many? When you speak it, it fills your mouth—it is not bounded by length or width.<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes I, Eihei [Dōgen], enter the ultimate state and offer profound discussion, simply wishing for you all to be steadily intimate in your mind field. Sometimes, within the gates and gardens of the monastery, I offer my own style of practical instruction, simply wishing you all to disport and play freely with spiritual penetration. Sometimes I spring quickly leaving no trace, simply wishing you all to drop off body and mind. Sometimes I enter the samādhi of self-fulfillment, simply wishing you all to trust what your hands can hold.<sup>3</sup>

Closely examine this flowing; without your complete effort right now, nothing would be actualized, nothing would flow.<sup>4</sup> Not only should we avoid deciding that what we see is what we see, we should be firmly convinced that there is an essential message to be studied in all the ten thousand activities. We should know that, just as we may see buddhas without knowing or understanding them, so we may see water and yet not know water, may see mountains and yet not know mountains. The precipitate assumption that the phenomena before one's eyes offer no further passage is not the study of the buddhas.<sup>5</sup>

Know that fundamentally you do not lack unsurpassed enlightenment, and you are replete with it continuously. But you may not realize it, and may be in the habit of arousing discriminatory views, and regard them as real. Without noticing, you miss the Great Way, and your efforts will be fruitless. Such discriminatory views create flowers of emptiness.<sup>6</sup>

Who would regard these apparitions of flowers in the sky as taking up a mistake and settling in with the mistake? Stepping forward misses, stepping backward misses, taking one step misses, taking two steps misses, and so there are mistakes upon mistakes. Heaven and earth are far distant [due to our mistakes], and yet the ultimate

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<sup>1</sup> "Negotiating the Way," in *Dogen on Meditation and Thinking*, trans. Hee Jin Kim.

<sup>2</sup> "On the Endeavor of the Way," *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen's Shobo Genzo*, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi.

<sup>3</sup> *Dogen's Extensive Record*, 266, trans. Taigen Leighton and Shohaku Okumura.

<sup>4</sup> "Time Being," *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen's Shobo Genzo*, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi.

<sup>5</sup> "Lancet of Zazen," trans. Carl Bielefeldt.

<sup>6</sup> "On the Endeavor of the Way," *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen's Shobo Genzo*, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi.

way is not difficult. Thoroughly understand that in the awesome presence, and the presence of awe, the Great Way is wide open.<sup>7</sup>

If you think that the samadhi of all buddhas, their unsurpassable great art, is just sitting uselessly doing nothing, you malign the Great Vehicle.<sup>8</sup> To arouse the thought of enlightenment, one always employs the mind of discriminative intellect. Without this discriminative intellect, the thought of enlightenment cannot be aroused. We do not construe the discriminative mind as the thought of enlightenment itself, but we arouse the thought of enlightenment through this mind of discriminative intellect.<sup>9</sup>

Arousing the aspiration for enlightenment is making a vow to bring all sentient beings [to the shore of enlightenment] before you bring yourself, and actualizing the vow. Even a humble person who arouses this aspiration is already a guiding teacher of all sentient beings. This aspiration is neither originally existent nor does it emerge all of a sudden. It is neither one nor many. It is neither spontaneous nor formed gradually. This aspiration is not in yourself, nor are you in it. This aspiration is not pervasive in this world of phenomena. It is neither before nor after. It is neither existent nor nonexistent. It is neither self nature nor other nature. It is neither common nature nor causeless nature. Yet, in response to affinity [between the teacher and the student], the aspiration for enlightenment arises. It is not given by buddhas or bodhisattvas, and it is not created by yourself. The aspiration arises in response to affinity, thus it is not spontaneous.<sup>10</sup>

The thought of enlightenment has many names but they all refer to one and the same mind. Ancestor Nagarjuna said, "The mind that fully sees into the uncertain world of birth and death is called the thought of enlightenment." Thus if we maintain this mind, this mind can become the thought of enlightenment. Indeed, when you understand discontinuity, the notion of self does not come into being, ideas of name and gain do not arise. Fearing the swift passage of the sunlight, practice the way as though saving your head from fire. Reflecting on this ephemeral life, make an endeavor in the manner of Buddha raising their foot.<sup>11</sup>

As unsurpassed bodhi's speaking turns into its hearing, one moves from the aspiration for "not doing evils" toward the practice of "not doing evils." As evils become something one is unable to do, the power of one's practice suddenly appears fully. This full appearance fully appears in measure as vast as all the earth, all the universe, all of time, and all dharmas.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> "Awesome Presence of Active Buddhas," *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen's Shobo Genzo*, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi.

<sup>8</sup> "On the Endeavor of the Way," *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen's Shobo Genzo*, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi.

<sup>9</sup> "Hotsu Bodaishin" in *Dogen on Meditation and Thinking*, trans. Hee Jin Kim.

<sup>10</sup> "Arousing the Aspiration for Enlightenment," *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen's Shobo Genzo*, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi.

<sup>11</sup> "Guidelines for Studying the Way," *Moon in a Dewdrop*, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi.

<sup>12</sup> "Not Doing Evils" (Shoaku makusa), trans. William Bodiford.

However, even if you have the highest understanding of mountains as all buddhas' wondrous characteristics, the truth is not only this. These are conditioned views. This is not the understanding of buddha ancestors, but merely looking through a bamboo pipe at a corner of the sky.<sup>13</sup>

When you meet a teacher, first ask for a kōan, and just keep it in mind and study it diligently.<sup>14</sup> Zhaozhou said, "No" (*Mu*). Hearing this word, the course of practice to be pursued opens up. The *mu* the Buddha-nature declares itself to be, the *mu* the dog declares itself to be, both must be utterances like Zhaozhou's *mu*. So does the *mu* a bystander calls out. Such a *mu* is a sun with stone-melting power.<sup>15</sup>

Be it known that, for studying the way, the established investigation is pursuing the way in zazen. The essential point of its standard is that there is a practice of a buddha that does not seek to make a buddha. Since the practice of a buddha is not to make a buddha, it is the realization of the kōan. The embodied buddha does not make a buddha; when "the baskets and cages" are broken, a seated buddha does not interfere with making a buddha. At just such a time, from one thousand, from ten thousand ages past, we originally have the power "to enter into Buddha and enter into Māra." Stepping forward and back, its measure fully "fills the ditches and clogs the moats."<sup>16</sup>

It is the kōan realized; traps and snares can never reach it. If you grasp the point, you are like a dragon gaining the water, like a tiger taking to the mountains.<sup>17</sup> Investigate this statement and understand the pivotal point of the ancestral school. Those who miss the essential meaning of the practice of sitting Zen may say that it is the practice of sitting buddha. But how can those who are not authentic descendants be sure that the practice of sitting Zen is the practice of sitting buddha?<sup>18</sup>

Those who have never sat do not have these words: they belong to the time of sitting and the person who sits, to the sitting buddha and the study of the sitting buddha. The sitting of a person's sitting and reclining is not this sitting buddha. Although a person's sitting naturally resembles a "seated buddha," or a buddha's sitting, it is like a person's "making a buddha," or the person who makes a buddha: though there are people who make buddhas, not all people make buddhas, and buddhas are not all people. Since all buddhas are not simply all people, a person is not necessarily a buddha, and a buddha is not necessarily a person.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> "Mountains and Waters Sutra," *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen's Shobo Genzo*, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi.

<sup>14</sup> *Dogen's Extensive Record*, V8, 14, trans. Taigen Leighton and Shohaku Okumura.

<sup>15</sup> "Buddha Nature," *The Heart of Dogen's Shobogenzo*, trans. Norman Waddell and Masao Abe.

<sup>16</sup> "Lancet of Zazen," trans. Carl Bielefeldt.

<sup>17</sup> "The Universal Recommendations for Zazen," trans. Soto Text Project.

<sup>18</sup> "The Point of Zazen," *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen's Shobo Genzo*, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi.

<sup>19</sup> "Lancet of Zazen," trans. Carl Bielefeldt.

At the very moment of sitting buddha there is killing buddha. If you want to find the extraordinary luminosity of killing buddha, always sit buddha. *Kill* may be an ordinary word that people commonly use, but its meaning here is totally different. Study how it is that sitting buddha is killing buddha. Investigate the fact that the buddha is itself killing buddha. Study killing and not killing a true person.<sup>20</sup>

The realm of all buddhas is inconceivable. It cannot be reached by intellect—much less can those who have no trust or who lack wisdom know it. Only those who have the great capacity of genuine trust can enter this realm. Those who have no trust are unable to accept it, however much they hear it. Even at the assembly on Vulture Peak, there were those who were told by Shakyamuni Buddha, “You may leave if you wish.”<sup>21</sup>

Thus, *mind itself is buddha* indicates buddhas of aspiration, practice, enlightenment, and nirvana. Those who have not actualized aspiration, practice, enlightenment, and nirvana do not experience *mind itself is buddha*.<sup>22</sup> On the great road of buddha ancestors there is always unsurpassable practice, continuous and sustained. It forms the circle of the way and is never cut off. Between aspiration, practice, enlightenment, and nirvana, there is not a moment’s gap; continuous practice is the circle of the way. This being so, continuous practice is undivided, not forced by you or others. The power of this continuous practice confirms you as well as others. It means your practice affects the entire earth and the entire sky in the ten directions.<sup>23</sup>

Know that when you realize this mind, the entire sky collapses and the whole earth explodes.<sup>24</sup> Quietly investigate this question: *Do people nowadays depend upon enlightenment?* Renew this question in your heart; renew this question in the top of your head.<sup>25</sup>

You should know that in the buddha house we do not discuss superiority or inferiority of the teaching; nor do we concern ourselves with the depth or shallowness of the dharma, but only with the genuineness of practice.<sup>26</sup> Those within the gate of the buddha ancestors’ authentic transmission venerate an accomplished adept who has

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<sup>20</sup> “The Point of Zazen,” *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen’s Shobo Genzo*, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi.

<sup>21</sup> “On the Endeavor of the Way,” *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen’s Shobo Genzo*, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi.

<sup>22</sup> “The Mind Itself is Buddha,” “On the Endeavor of the Way,” *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen’s Shobo Genzo*, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi.

<sup>23</sup> “Continuous Practice,” *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen’s Shobo Genzo*, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi.

<sup>24</sup> “The Mind Itself is Buddha,” *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen’s Shobo Genzo*, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi.

<sup>25</sup> “Great Enlightenment,” *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen’s Shobo Genzo*, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi.

<sup>26</sup> “On the Endeavor of the Way,” *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen’s Shobo Genzo*, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi.

attained the Way and merged with realization, and entrust this master with the upholding of buddhadharma.<sup>27</sup>

If your eye of study is clear, your true dharma eye is clear. As your true dharma eye is clear, you have a clear eye of study. What authentically transmits this essential matter is no other than the power to see a great teacher. This is a great matter. This is a great dharani. What is called a great teacher is a buddha ancestor.<sup>28</sup>

The “becoming close to the Dharma Master” that is spoken of in the *Lotus Sutra* is like the Second Ancestor’s eight years of serving his teacher, after which he got the marrow of a whole arm; it is like Nanyue’s fifteen years of pursuing the way. Getting the master’s marrow is called “becoming close to.” When the *Lotus Sutra* speaks of the “bodhisattva path,” this is “I am also like this, you are also like this.”<sup>29</sup>

Where there is a thorough inquiry of a buddha ancestor, there is an expression of a buddha ancestor.<sup>30</sup> Investigate in this way and thoroughly study someone who is speechless.<sup>31</sup> Even if thousands of sages appear all together, the single path of going beyond is not transmitted. No transmission means a thousand sages protect that which is not transmitted. You may be able to understand in this way. But there is something further to say about this. It is not that a thousand sages or a thousand wise people do not exist, but that a single path of going beyond is not merely the realm of the sages or of the wise.<sup>32</sup>

This birth-death itself is the life of the Buddha. When you neither loathe nor crave it, only then do you enter the heart of the Buddha for the first time. But do not calculate it with your mind or explain it in words. When you cast off and forget your body-mind and plunge into the abode of the Buddha, so that the Buddha may act upon you and you may devote yourself completely to it, you become a buddha, liberated from the suffering of birth-death, without effort or anxiety.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> “On the Endeavor of the Way,” *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen’s Shobo Genzo*, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi.

<sup>28</sup> “Dharani,” “On the Endeavor of the Way,” *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen’s Shobo Genzo*, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi.

<sup>29</sup> “Kenbustu,” trans. T Griffith Foulk, in “Dōgen’s Us of Rujing’s ‘Just Sit (shikan taza) and Other Koans.”

<sup>30</sup> “Expressions,” *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen’s Shobo Genzo*, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi.

<sup>31</sup> “Expressions,” *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen’s Shobo Genzo*, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi.

<sup>32</sup> “Going Beyond Buddha,” *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye: Zen Master Dogen’s Shobo Genzo*, trans. Kazuaki Tanahashi.

<sup>33</sup> “Shoji,” in *Dogen on Meditation and Thinking*, trans. Hee Jin Kim.